

98-09-13a

We're back now from our break and resuming our study in Genesis chapter 12. We covered in the first lesson the fact that we wanted to make something of a correction to our understanding of Tira. And there were two, hopefully, there were two main points that came out of that.

One, in understanding that Tira died in Haran and that Abram left afterward, this resolves what would otherwise be an apparent inconsistency in our scriptures between what Stephen says in Acts 7 and what Genesis says in chapter 11. Secondly, it gives us some additional background. The same principles that we observed before are still valid.

Tira could have and perhaps should have proceeded on to the Promised Land. He certainly had that opportunity because God had spoken to Abram in Ur, in Mesopotamia, just as Stephen affirms over in Acts chapter 7. And Tira was apparently aware of this because when Abram said, God has spoken to me and I'm going to go to the land that he will show me, Tira sort of took over the project and said, okay, fine, we'll all go. And he packed everything up and decided the itinerary and he got up there to Haran and then Tira said, well, let's all stop here and catch our breath.

And then he never went any further. And he, in fact, ends up dying there. But the other thing that it straightens out for us is what I had alluded to in the first lesson in the verses 27 through 30 of chapter 11.

Tira begot these three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. In the order there, it would appear that Abram might be the oldest. But when we straighten out the birth and death years of Tira, we realize that dying at the age of 145 and Abram leaving at that point, we know that Abram is 70.

So that tells us that Tira was 75 when Abram was born, which means that one of the other brothers, either Haran or Nahor, was older than Abram and was by rights Tira's heir. I think that it was probably Haran. I think Haran was probably the firstborn.

Haran begot Lot. But Haran died either through disease or accident. We don't know from the scriptures what caused his decease.

But he died in verse 28 before his father Tira in his native land in Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram and Nahor took wives and had these daughters. Nahor winds up marrying his brother Haran's daughter.

He winds up marrying his niece Milka. And there is no record here of any children other than Lot, who is the son of the dead Haran. This suggests to us the idea of heirship, of carrying forward the line.

You've had in the preceding chapter the line of Shem all the way down through Tira to

the three sons of Tira, Abram, Haran and Nahor. Haran has died. Abram is childless.

Nahor, there is no mention here of his children at this point. So the only male representative of the next generation is Lot. Well, the line has come down through Tira and Abram and Nahor at this point apparently don't have any sons.

We know that for sure of Abram. So, what are our expectations for Lot? Well, based on what we know of the lifespan of Tira now, this helps us understand because Haran as the eldest son would be Tira's heir. Once Haran inherits everything from Tira, he is now able to pass it on to his son, Lot.

However, because of the fact that Haran dies before his father Tira in his native land in Ur of the Chaldees, Tira is still alive and in possession of all of his stuff. And he still has the requirement to pass his stuff down to the next generation, which is either going to be Abram or Nahor. So Lot, because of the early decease of his father, is cut out of the inheritance line here.

Who determines lifespans? Who determines when and where people are born and where they fit into the chronology of human history in terms of generations and nations and families and so forth? Obviously, God determines when and where we will be born, where we fit in. There is a reason why Lot is the son of Haran and why he does not inherit as we go forward in Genesis. Because this question is raised right here.

What about Lot? Lot is a male descendant, second generation from Tira. Why is he not the heir? Why doesn't he participate in the covenant blessings and promises that are made to Abram and to his descendants, Isaac and Jacob? He is the first representative of that generation and yet he misses out. Why is that? Well, this idea is suggested to us in the mention of Lot here and in his accompanying Abram to the land.

Why can't Abram just sort of adopt Lot and have him be the heir? This is going to occur to Abram. So the idea of issue or of the heirs of promise, continuing the line of Shem, is really introduced here. Secondly, when we look at the beginning part of chapter 12, the Lord had said to Abram, and then we have the words of the Lord to Abram and we'll return to these in just a moment, but look down at verse 4. Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him and Lot went with him.

Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Well, now see, I've just recognized that I made a chronological goof. I think I said Abram was seventy when he departed.

He's seventy-five. So, at any rate, Abram took Sarah his wife and Lot his brother's son and all their possessions that they had gathered and the people whom they had acquired in Haran. How did they acquire these people and goods in Haran? Well, apparently, Abram inherited these at the point of Tira's death.

Otherwise, if he were a younger son or if his father were still alive, the bulk of the family's wealth would have remained with Tira in Haran. So, this is another secondary sort of corroboration of the fact of Tira's death that Abram takes this huge amount of wealth with him when he departs. It's not a matter of dividing with his father or doing like the prodigal son and going to the father and saying, giving my inheritance and let me go.

Apparently, this came to Abram legitimately as the heir of Tira, either because he is the firstborn or because he is now in line for the inheritance because of the death of Haran. So, if we go with the chronology of the Samaritan Pentateuch and of Philo, if Tira is 145 years old and Abram is 75, then it is possible for Abram to have been the firstborn since he would have been born in Tira's 70th year. But Abram took Sarah his wife, Lot his brother's son, all their possessions that they had gathered and the people whom they had acquired in Haran and they departed to go to the land of Canaan.

So, they came to the land of Canaan. Now, this word that God had spoken back when Abram was in Ur, what was it? It's recorded for us in verses 1 through 3. The Lord had said to Abram, Get out of your country, from your family and your father's house, to a land that I will show you. It's indeterminate.

It's unclear exactly where or what this land is. It requires a step of faith for Abram to get up and depart at this point. There is a sevenfold promise made conditioned on this obedience.

If Abram obeys the Lord, God says in verses 2 and 3, seven things will happen. One, I will make you a great nation. Very interesting here that the word for nation is *goy*.

The word that later will always be used of the nations in contradistinction to Israel. It says, I will make you a great *goy*. I will make you a great nation.

This is nation in the sense of having a territory, a government, an identity in comparison to other nations of the world. Secondly, I will bless you. Promise of personal blessing from God.

It's a general statement of blessing. It doesn't say how or in what way. It's just a promise of God's blessing.

Thirdly, I will make your name great. We looked at this a little bit last time as it compares to the statement God makes to David, that he would make a great name for him in a house, in a dynasty. The fourth statement is, you shall be a blessing.

Now in the English here, it sounds like this is sort of a predictive future, that this is something else that God is going to do for Abram. But in Hebrew, this is an imperative. This is, you shall be a blessing.

It's in the same construction as go. Get out of your country, go up out of your country, from your family, from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. Be a blessing.

It's an imperative. It's a very unusual construction in Hebrew. It has sparked a great deal of analysis and argument for one view or another.

But it is in fact an imperative. There isn't any way to get around it. It is a command.

Go be a blessing. Verse 3, the fifth statement here, I will bless those who bless you. The sixth statement, I will curse him who curses you.

Seventh, in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So there's a seven-fold statement here. And at the center of it, at the place of emphasis in this seven-fold statement is the imperative.

Be a blessing. Grammatically, the first three statements take one form. You have the imperative in the middle, and then the last three take a grammatical form.

So there's emphasis on verse 2b or c there. You shall be a blessing. Be a blessing.

Go and be, and I will do these six things. Great nation, blessing, great name. Bless those who bless you.

Curse those who curse you. In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And you can see on each side of that pivotal statement, be a blessing, before it are the personal or national blessings for Israel.

The great nation, blessing from God, and the great name. And after that statement, that imperative to be a blessing, is the effect on the world. Those who bless Abram and his descendants will be blessed.

Those who curse Abram and his descendants will be cursed. And in him, all the families of the earth will be blessed. So, these promises have as their condition, fulfilling the command to go and to be.

To separate from family, kindred, and nation of origin, and to be a blessing. It's also interesting, this idea of blessing, in the end of verse 3 there, where he says, In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. This particular construction, it looks like it's a passive form.

There are five places in scripture where this statement is made, about the nations of the earth, or the clans of the earth, will be blessed in or through the seed of Abram. Three of these are a nifal, which is the stem in Hebrew, that can either be a passive voice or a reflexive. If you use the nifal, the passive would be, Be blessed, you will be blessed, you will receive the action of blessing from some other source.

Reflexive means, to do something to yourself. I will bless myself, or I will bring blessing on myself. The nifal can be either one, depending on the context, it can either be passive or reflexive.

But the hithpahel, which is out of these five statements that are all virtually identical, three of them are in the hithpahel, two of them are in the nifal. Well, the hithpahel is only reflexive. I will do something to myself.

So, if we view the nifals, which could go either way, in the light of the three hithpahels, the best translation of the end of verse 3 here is, In you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves, or shall bring blessing on themselves. Israel is going to exist as a nation, the descendants of Abram are going to exist as a nation, and in them, through them, everyone in the world will have the opportunity to bring blessing on themselves. In a way, this is a restatement of what he has said in the first part of the verse.

How can you bring blessing on yourself? Be a friend to Israel. Bless Israel. I will bless those who bless you.

I will curse those who curse you. There is an opportunity for all of the other peoples in the world. The descendants of Abram are going to create a decision point for everyone in the world.

They are the custodians of the truth of God. They are the place of residence for the presence of God, the oracles of God, all of the things that Paul mentions over in Romans when he talks in chapter 9 and he says, To them belong the fathers and the prophets and the oracles of God and all of these things that Israel is given custodianship of. This creates a decision point for the world.

You either come to Israel and bless them and be a friend to them, ally yourself with them and support them like Cyrus up there in Tyre or you establish animosity between yourself and Israel and everything that Israel stands for. Israel is a visible representative, an earthly representative of God and the things of God and the attitude that the rest of the world has toward the descendants of Abraham is going to determine whether they are blessed or cursed by God. In you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves or bring blessing on themselves.

So, it is a decision point. How do they do that? Well, it's right there in the verse. If they bless you, I will bless them.

If they curse you, I will curse them. So, in a sense, the way people treat Israel is a reflection of their attitude toward God Himself. When they look at Israel, they recognize that Israel is the theocratic representation of God on earth in the Old Testament age.

So, it's a very powerful statement to make and this seven-fold statement by God centers on the third part of verse 2, verse 2c, if you will. Be a blessing. Israel, in certain periods

of its history, abdicates this responsibility.

This is what the book of Jonah is all about. I am fond of using this statement as an illustration, but to look at the surface of things and not see the deeper truth, I heard someone once say, well, this is like looking at the novel Moby Dick and saying, well, it's just a story about a man and a whale, rather than seeing the tremendous amount of baggage that Melville put into that book and his view of the struggle between good and evil, right and wrong, what the nature of obsession and so forth is. There's a lot more going on in Moby Dick than just a guy chasing a whale.

Well, the same is true of the book of Jonah. It's a lot more than a story of a man being swallowed by a great fish. Yonah means the dove.

The dove can be a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The dove can also be a symbol of being flighty, not knowing which way it's going to go. And Jonah, with his ambivalence toward Nineveh, his lack of concern, the very last statement in the book of Jonah, shall I not be merciful to this city that has so many souls in it that don't know their right hand from their left, and many cattle, points up the difference between the attitude of God, who is anxious to spare the citizens of that capital city of the enemy, and Jonah, who is out there looking for shade so that he can watch the big conflagration, watch the fire in Brimstone rain down and destroy it.

And Jonah is put for the nation of Israel itself. Israel, O nation of God, where is your heart for the surrounding people? Where is your response to the command to be a blessing, to be a light in the world, to reflect the presence of God and the grace of God to the rest of the world? Abram receives this command, be a blessing. You are the place where people can either bless themselves or curse themselves.

They can either come into an understanding of and relationship with the God of Israel, or they can reflect, as Pharaoh will, their hardness of heart and their rejection of God and all of the things of God. So, it's a powerful early statement of what will be the heritage and the responsibility of Israel as a nation. Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him.

Lot went with him in verse 4. Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took Sarah his wife, Lot his brother's son, all their possessions they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran. And they departed to go to the land of Canaan.

Even at this point, you have this idea that you see again in Exodus. When Israel leaves Egypt, there's a great mixed multitude that goes with them. Egyptians and other slaves of various nationalities, and there's a group of people who attach themselves to Israel and go with them.

And cast their hat in the ring or attach their fortunes to those of Israel. And you see the same thing happen here when Abram leaves Haran. There is a group of people that they have acquired that come with.

They depart to go to the land of Canaan. So, they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree or the oak tree of Moreh.

And the Canaanites were then in the land. This word Moreh, the terebinth or oak of Moreh, is fascinating because Moreh means teacher. This is literally the oak of the teacher or the terebinth of the teacher.

You find this same expression again if you go over to Deuteronomy chapter 11 and verse 30. Much later in the history of the Old Testament age, in the words of God to Moses to pass on to the nation of Israel. Look at verse 26 of Deuteronomy chapter 11.

Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse. The blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today. And the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

Now it shall be, when the Lord your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not on the other side of the Jordan, toward the setting sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the plain opposite Gilgal, beside the terebinth trees of Moreh? This terebinth tree that Abram comes to is in the plain between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the mount of blessing and the mount of cursing. You will cross over the Jordan and go in to possess the land which the Lord your God has given you, and you will possess it and dwell in it.

And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today. So we have an early suggestion here that Abram, when he comes into the land, hasn't got the luxury of resting on his laurels. Well, God spoke to me in Ur and said, get thee up and go.

Now I've gotten myself up and went. And here I am in the land and everybody will be happy over there. The battle has been won.

It's all over with. All the promises of God are mine and so forth. When he comes to the terebinth or the oak of Moreh, the oak of the teacher, this is the place to start to exercise discernment, exercise wisdom.

What is good and leads to blessing? What is bad and leads to cursing? You can look to one side and see Mount Ebal. You can look to the other side and see Mount Gerizim. It's a decision place.

It's a place to remember that entering the land is the beginning of a new challenge of living in a way that pleases God, of relying on God for provision and for sustaining grace and for blessing and not losing sight of the reason for which you have come to the land in the first place. Well, when he comes here to the terebinth tree of Moreh, the Canaanites are in the land. He's standing there between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim.

Then verse 7 says, The Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your descendants I will give this land. So there he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. Notice that twice we're told in verse 7, The Lord appeared to Abram.

Remember back in verse 1, The Lord said to Abram. He heard the voice of the Lord that told him to get up and go out of the land. And he eventually obeys.

He has sort of a detour there in Haran until his father dies. But now he has completed that obedience. He's in the land.

Now God appears to him. Remember our scripture, Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Through his faith and through his obedience, Abram is developing a closer relationship with God.

The Lord who spoke to Abram in Ur, Now appears to Abram in the plain of Moreh. At the oak of the terebinth. And he confirms the promise that he has made earlier.

He says, To your descendants I will give this land. God had said earlier, Go to the land that I will show you. He has come now to the land of Canaan.

And God says, This is it. This is the land that I was talking about in Ur. That I said I would show you.

Well, here it is. This is the land I will give to your descendants. Abram builds an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him.

He moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel. Bethel means, Beit is the word for house. And El is short for Elohim.

So house of God. Beit El is Bethel. And it is significant in the later history of Israel.

That this is one of the first places that we find it mentioned. He pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And you remember Ai later on in the Exodus.

After the conquest of Jericho. The walls come tumbling down. The very next town they go to is Ai.

Bethel on the west. Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord.

And called on the name of the Lord. Then Abraham journeyed on going still toward the

south. And the word south there is a word that is in common use even today.

It is Negev. Negev. N-E-G-E-V.

Which is the word for now the desert. A specific part of Palestine. The southern portion there is the Negev.

Verse 10. Now there was a famine in the land. And Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there.

For the famine was severe in the land. We have to ask ourselves this question. Why does Abram continue traveling toward the south? He arrives at the oak of Moreh.

He arrives between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. God appears to him there. He builds an altar there.

He goes to Bethel. And builds an altar there. He has all of these things that he has acquired in Haran.

Why does he leave? God appears to him and says, This is it. This is the land that I told you to come to. This is the land I will give to your descendants.

But he leaves there. And he continues to travel south. Why? Well, we are not told.

It just says that he continued traveling. He was kind of in the traveling mode. And once he got to the destination, he didn't stop traveling.

The first problem he had when he left Ur and got to Haran is they stopped and they never got started again. Well, now he's gotten started and he can't stop. And, of course, this is one of the big questions for us in life is to know when to go and when to stop.

And if you have stopped, when do you get going again? And if you've gotten going again, when do you stop? Well, Abram is learning these things. And he apparently is not doing well because as he travels to the south, he winds up. You know the Negev is right on the edge of the Arabian Desert.

And even in ancient times, you get to some thin country there. Up in the plain of Moreh up there by Jericho and Ai and Beth El, it's a great fertile area. But Abram doesn't stay there.

He keeps on traveling to the south. Well, now, surprise, surprise, he's down there in the south. And they have a drought.

There's a famine. And it's a severe famine. So, now, Abram has a choice.

He can either backtrack and go back the way he came and go north or he can continue on south. And what does he do? He goes down to Egypt to dwell there because of the

famine. Well, Egypt is not a good place to go.

At this early place in the Old Testament, we don't know near as much about Egypt as we know later on. We know Egypt is going to be the place of bondage. We know that Egypt is going to be a symbol of human strength.

We want to stop for just a moment and look at what Scripture says about Egypt. And we're going to see that this is one of the first places where this suggestion and this symbolic value for Egypt begins to be evident. Later on in Genesis, we'll see this in the life of Isaac.

In chapter 26 in verse 2, Isaac is going to face a similar choice. Look at chapter 26 of Genesis. There was a famine in the land.

Besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. This is a different famine in a later time. Now, Isaac is the protagonist of the story here.

Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar. Then the Lord appeared to him, and what does he say? Do not go down to Egypt. Live in the land of which I shall tell you.

He's telling Isaac, don't make the mistake that your father Abraham made. When there was a famine in the land, he went down to Egypt. And apparently this idea occurs to Isaac as well.

Isaac's thinking parallels his father's in many ways. As you see when you go on down through Genesis 26, you're going to get a repetition of what we're about to see in Genesis 12. But God comes to Isaac and forestalls Isaac making the same mistake that Abraham makes.

When there's a famine in the land, he says, don't go to Egypt. It's not the place to go. Of course, in Genesis 39, Egypt is the place where Joseph ends up when his brothers sell him into slavery.

And yet, at the end of the story of Joseph, we know that Joseph says, you all meant this as a curse, but God meant it for good. It winds up being a blessing. It's the means of preservation of Jacob and all of his family.

And turn over in that connection toward the end of Genesis to Genesis chapter 46 and verse 3. You remember that the pharaoh's dream about the fat cows and the lean cows and so forth, and one of the bases of Joseph rising to prominence in Egypt is that he can make provision for this great famine that's going to take place. Once again, you're going to have famine associated with the descendants of Abraham. But in Genesis 46, Israel took his journey.

You know, there is a famine and they can't seem to sustain themselves up in the land

where Jacob has been living. And so Joseph sends for his father and says, come down here. I've got provision to get us through the time of famine.

Because God revealed it ahead of time. We stocked up the grain. Come on down here and stay alive.

So Israel, in Genesis 46, Israel took his journey with all that he had, came to Beersheba, offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, here I am.

He said, I am God, the God of your father. Do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt.

And I will also surely bring you up again. And Joseph will put his hand on your eyes. So Jacob gets up and goes.

So we're about to see Abram make a mistake and have a failure in going down to Egypt. We see in the career of Isaac that God says, don't go to Egypt. Here, God tells Jacob, go to Egypt.

What conclusion do we draw from this? Well, obviously and most simply, there's a time to go to Egypt and there's a time not to. There is a way to go to Egypt and there is a way not to go to Egypt. What does Egypt represent? You can think in Exodus about the story of Moses, his career when he grows up in Egypt.

He's a son of the princess, Moses and the bulrushes and so forth. He kills the taskmaster and he leaves Egypt and goes to Midian for 40 years. By the time you get to Exodus 4.19, God tells Moses, get up from Midian and go back to Egypt.

God has something for him to do back in Egypt. So Egypt as a symbol of a place of failure or a place where people fall apart and rely on human strength doesn't necessarily mean that you never go to Egypt or that you never dwell in Egypt. We find Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph all dwelling in Egypt.

We find Moses in Egypt, out of Egypt, back in Egypt, leaving Egypt. The nation of Israel is going to be made a nation in Egypt. God tells Jacob, don't fear to go down to Egypt.

I will make of you a great nation there. But there is a time to go and there is a way to go. That's what we've seen so far.

Later on in Israel's history, when you get over to Isaiah and to Ezekiel, we won't turn there, but there are well-known passages, Isaiah chapter 30, chapter 31, along in there. You have the invasion of the northern kingdom by Sennacherib. The Assyrian crisis is taking place and the southern kingdom, the nation of Israel, everybody is looking around, where can we get some help? The Assyrians are going to swallow us up.

What do we do? God has brought this on them because of their apathy and indifference to Him. They are supposed to be turning to God, but instead they are looking for a human solution. Where do they turn? They look to Egypt, the place of bondage, the place of slavery, the place that they have been delivered from.

But they are going to turn to Egypt for help. God says, here is Egypt with their horses and their chariots and their military strength. He says, don't go there.

Our scripture reading this morning, I will bring down the helper and the helpee. They will fall together if you go to Egypt for help because God says you are supposed to turn to Me. In Isaiah 36, verse 6, He says, Egypt is a broken reed.

If you lean on it, it is going to ram up into your hand and wound you. In Ezekiel 17, verse 15, Zedekiah, later on in the history of the southern kingdom, he is going to want to turn to Egypt for help. Once again, it is a mistake.

Ezekiel 29 is a woe song about Egypt and what is going to happen to Egypt. They have been great and mighty and relied on their own strength, but God is going to bring them down and make them desolate. He is going to humble them.

He is going to crush them under the feet of their enemies. Isaiah 19 is another passage that is an entire chapter dedicated to a prophecy about Egypt. God says, you will be brought low.

You will be humiliated. Your cities will be destroyed. Your people will be scattered.

It echoes in many ways language that God uses about Israel. Interestingly, there are also promises to Egypt that after the time of their desolation, they will be regathered and they will be restored. Turn with me to Isaiah 19 to just quickly summarize this idea, which is mentioned many places in the prophets.

If you just scan through Isaiah 19, you have the burden, the woe song against Egypt. The Lord rides on a swift cloud. He will come into Egypt.

The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. I will set Egyptians against Egyptians. Everyone will fight against his brother, everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.

The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst. I will destroy their council. They will consult their idols and charmers, the mediums and sorcerers.

The Egyptians I will give into the hands of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them, says the Lord, the Lord of hosts. The waters will fail from the sea, and the river will be wasted and dried up. The rivers will turn foul.

Of course, Egypt is almost defined by the Nile River and its annual flooding and so forth

that fertilized the land and gave them the strength of their agricultural system. The river will turn foul. Brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up.

The reeds and rushes will wither. The papyrus reeds by the river, by the mouth of the river, everything sown by the river, will wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishermen also will mourn.

Those who lament, they will lament. Who cast hooks into the river, they will languish. Who spread nets on the waters, those who work in fine flax, and those who weave fine fabric, will be ashamed.

Its foundations will be broken. All those who make wages will be troubled of soul. The princes of Zoan are fools.

Pharaoh's wise counselors give foolish counsel. And so forth. You go all down.

They're going to be desolated. In verse 16, Egypt will be like women, will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he waves over it. The land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt.

Everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he has determined against it. In that day, five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the Lord of hosts. One will be called the city of destruction.

In that day, there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar to the Lord at its border. And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt. For they will cry to the Lord because of the oppressors.

And he will send them a Savior and a mighty one. And he will deliver them. What a strange and wonderful promise to Egypt, the oppressor, the land of bondage, the land that symbolizes human strength and human solutions to problems, that God will desolate them and they will turn as a result to God.

And they will have an altar. They will have a pillar of remembrance. God will send to them a Savior.

This, of course, is a foreshadowing of the light to the Gentiles that Israel represents and that later the Lord Jesus Christ himself becomes. The Lord will be known to Egypt in verse 21. The Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and will make sacrifice and offering.

Yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform it. There will be salvation in Egypt when they turn to the Lord. The Lord will strike Egypt.

He will strike it and heal it. They will return to the Lord and he will be entreated by them

and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians.

In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed is Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands and Israel my inheritance. Israel serves bitter bondage in Egypt. Israel is taken captive and enslaved by Assyria.

But Isaiah says there will come a day when salvation will come to Egypt. Salvation will come to Assyria. They will flank, they will be like jewels in the setting of a ring where Israel is the central and greatest jewel and they will flank and be blessed by association with Israel and there will be salvation and worship of God in those lands.

And how strange this must have sounded to the ears of the Israelites when Isaiah pronounced this prophecy. The hated Assyrians who were currently afflicting and taking them captive, the hated Egyptians that represented bitter bondage and the memory of that was still strong in the minds of Israel and yet God pronounces blessing and salvation on and for these nations because of their turning to the Lord and their support and association with Israel. These are fulfillments of the covenant promise that God makes to Abram way back hundreds of years before in Ur of the Chaldees.

But Egypt represents going for human help in so many of these passages. And of course scripture itself says, Cursed is the man who puts his trust in man, who makes flesh his strength. You can find this mentioned in Jeremiah 17 and verse 5. Jeremiah 17, 9 is a well-known verse that many have memorized.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. But four verses before that in Jeremiah 17, 5, you have a statement about the strength of the flesh. He says, Thus says the Lord, Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.

It isn't necessarily intrinsically a bad thing to go to Egypt. Jacob is going to go there at the Lord's behest. God says, Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt.

I will make you a great nation there. Joseph goes from slavery to being the ruler of all Egypt in the land of Egypt. When is it a curse? When is it a sin and a mistake to go to Egypt? When your heart turns and departs from the Lord.

There is a time to go to Egypt. There is a time to be sustained in the world or in that which human strength and human energy provides in this picture. It isn't so much going to Egypt.

It's what's in your heart as you go. What is in your heart when you leave the land of promise, when you leave the land of the presence of God, the altars to God, the

appearances of God? What's in your heart when you leave? Are you leaving because it's a part of God's plan? I will make you a great nation there. I will use contact with these people.

I will use adversity. I will give you of their substance. When Israel comes out of the land of Egypt, they are possessed of great amounts of wealth and goods that come from the Egyptians.

What's in your heart? When we resume our study next week, we'll see what's in Abraham's heart as he lies about his wife and lives in fear down in Egypt, escaping the famine. That tells us a little bit about why Abraham goes. What is in our heart? It isn't necessarily wrong to be in and from the land of Egypt, but what's going on in your heart and in your mind when you're there? That's the question we have to ask ourselves as we live in the world and are not of it.

Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you for your grace and your faithfulness toward us. We thank you that there is provision no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

We pray that as we learn these truths from the book of Genesis and from your word, that God the Holy Spirit will take them and strengthen us, give us clear vision to discern the better things, to know when to move and when to stand fast, to be in the very center of your perfect will for our lives. We ask and pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.